

This foreword by Peter Casarella will accompany the forthcoming *Theology of the People: The Pastoral and Theological Roots of Pope Francis*, a collection of essays on Pope Francis written by Fr. Juan Carlos Scannone, S.J.. The volume is scheduled to appear in 2020 with Paulist Press.

Foreword

The arrival of an Argentine Pope on the morning of September 23rd, 2015 on the South Lawn of the White House had some precedent. Francis was not the first Pope to visit the White House or to speak from the South Lawn. Pope John Paul II visited President Jimmy Carter on the South Lawn in 1979, and Pope Benedict XVI's arrival in 2008 was accompanied by the soprano Kathleen Battle. But this visit was very different. Francis's visit came in the wake of a new Cuban policy that he had helped to make possible. In fact, it was no accident that he had arrived in the U.S. the previous afternoon from Cuba. The Pope's address to Congress on the following day would be the first of its kind. At the White House he set the tone for the entire visit with these words:

I am deeply grateful for your welcome in the name of all Americans. As the son of an immigrant family, I am happy to be a guest in this country, which was largely built by such families. I look forward to these days of encounter and dialogue, in which I hope to listen to, and share, many of the hopes and dreams of the American people.¹

The Pope did *not* introduce himself as a global ambassador. Instead he arrived in Washington, D.C. with his own story of hailing from the humble ranks of immigrants. Political repression rather than economic scarcity seemed to have motivated the move of the Bergoglios from Northern Italy to the Southern Cone of Latin America. The Pope's father, Mario Bergoglio, had fled the Piedmont region of Italy in 1929 to escape the fascism of Benito Mussolini. In Buenos

¹ Pope Francis, "Welcoming Ceremony," South Lawn of the White House, Washington, D.C. Wednesday, 23 September 2015, available on-line at http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150923_usa-benvenuto.html.

Aires, the Bergoglios built a Catholic home that enjoyed the outreach to immigrants and labor unions undertaken in the name of Peronism. Emilce Cuda has compared the early Peronist social welfare policy to the New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In any case, Pope Francis stood before President Obama in September of 2015 and immediately allied himself with all the immigrant families would had been granted shelter in the United States or were seeking such a protection. Francis hoped to strike a bond with the U.S. president that was as strong and deep as Pope John Paul II's famous bond with the anti-Communist Ronald Reagan. Bergoglio was saying that he is just as "American" as Obama, the son of a Kenyan economist, for he shared the story of being from a family of immigrants even though his American identity came from very far south of the U.S.-Mexico border. The Pope's desire to share the hopes and dreams of Americans in the North echoed remarks that he had made in Havana to Cuban youth a few days earlier.

This book introduces the key ideas that led the Argentine Pope to introduce himself in this way, a mode of self-presentation in the U.S. context markedly different from that of his two immediate predecessors. *The Theology of the People* by Juan Carlos Scannone, S.J. is the best available resource for an English-speaking audience of the theological roots of the Latin American thinker and now Bishop of Rome, Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Other books in English have examined complementary facets of this story. Austen Ivereigh gave a masterful presentation of Bergoglio's pre-pontifical life.² Massimo Borghesi has sketched the outlines of his philosophical itinerary in an extremely elucidating and well-documented fashion.³ Thomas Rourke offers

² Austen Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope* (New York: Henry Holt, 2014).

³ Massimo Borghesi, *The Mind of Pope Francis: Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Intellectual Journey* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2018).

clarity on the Argentine sources of his social and political itinerary.⁴ But none of these superb books were written from *within* the Jesuit microcosm that Jorge Mario Bergoglio once led and to which he remains quite loyal. Fr. Scannone lived for several decades with Bergoglio in San Miguel, the Jesuit Seminary in the outskirts of Buenos Aires. He had even taught Greek to the young seminarian. Immediately after the election of the Archbishop of Buenos Aires to the see of Rome, Scannone was called to Rome to work for the Jesuit newspaper *Civiltà Cattolica* and help the Pope in whatever tasks that he assigned to his former teacher. The bond between them was eminently personal, proudly *Porteño*, profoundly Ignatian, deeply intellectual, and faithfully ecclesial and had also been forged over many years.⁵ Popes seldom cite individual thinkers in their magisterial writings, but the reference in *Laudato Si'* to an essay of Scannone on the font of popular wisdom regarding generosity that can be gleaned from the poor is absolutely indicative of this special bond.⁶ In other words, there are insights in these pages that were developed out of culture of encounter between these two men that could not have been discovered, nurtured, or verified through any other form of exchange, investigation, or documentation. Scannone's *La teología del pueblo* thus gives us a front row seat to the still unfolding historical event of the pontificate of Pope Francis.

Sadly and to my own shock and surprise, this masterpiece of philosophical and theological learning appears in English posthumously. "Cachito," as he is known to his friends, passed on November 27, 2019 at the age of eighty-eight after unexpectedly succumbing to a

⁴ Thomas Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis's Social and Political Thought: From Argentina to the Vatican* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

⁵ *Porteño* refers to a resident of Buenos Aires since the port of that city was critical in the development of the city and the nation.

⁶ *Laudato Si'* note 117, citing: Juan Carlos Scannone, S.J., "La irrupción del pobre y la lógica de la gratuidad," in *Irrupción del pobre y quehacer filosófico. Hacia una nueva racionalidad*, ed. Juan Carlos Scannone and Marcelo Perine (Buenos Aires: Bonum, 1993), 225-230.

stroke a few weeks earlier. The stroke had prevented him from traveling to Italy for the awarding of an honorary doctorate from the Sofia University near Florence. He died in San Miguel, also the former residence of his friend Bergoglio. My last direct contact with him was in mid-October at an Interamerican theological dialogue that was organized in Rio de Janeiro by Maria Clara Bingemer and myself. In that venue he had displayed his characteristic good humor and indefatigable intellectual spryness. At one point he spontaneously interjected several well-formed paragraphs on Bernard Lonergan help us new a new path in the midst of an intense exchange about the intercontinental theological method that would connect Latin American liberation theology to the Catholic theology in the United States. I never expected that to be one of my last encounters. Fr. Scannone was always generous with his time and eager to contribute to both the loftiest of academic debates and the most challenging of pastoral exchanges. To the very end he remained a man of dialogue who could usually be encountered in dialogue.

English-speaking readers are still going to ask: “Who are the ‘people?’” Can this category of thought of Peronist vintage be imbibed by U.S. Catholics without some alteration of the original recipe? What connotations does the concept of *pueblo* have that actually embraces the immigrant stories of U.S. Catholics and what social, political, and ecclesial meanings does it convey for those not recently arrived? Drawing upon the work of Lonergan scholar Gerald Whelan, Scannone compares the polyhedron of *Evangelii Gaudium* to the historical communitarian subject, a concept he articulates with the aid of a scholar of Lonergan.⁷ Pope Francis says in *Evangelii Gaudium*, that the Church listens *in a communitarian way* to the

⁷ Juan Carlos Scannone, SJ, *La teología del pueblo. Raíces teológicas del papa Francisco* (Maliaño, Spain: Sal Terrae, 2017), 245-6. [This is found in ch. 10 of the present volume.] Whelan is an Irish-born Jesuit who taught for many years at Hekima College in Nairobi and since 2007 has been a professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

promptings of the Spirit, especially when she is gathered in a synod.⁸ The Spanish edition of the apostolic exhortation abounds with references to communitarian praxis and communitarian paths of learning.⁹ But the term appears just once in the English translation and then only in relationship to the sanctifying grace that accompanies the sacraments.¹⁰

The suppression of the communitarian “we” in the English translation calls for a new look at Scannone’s writings on this matter. Scannone maintains that the communitarian celebrations of popular devotions by the poor of Jesus Christ witness to the presence of a communitarian mysticism in our very midst. This spirituality is just as rich as that of the mystics of the past like St. John of the Cross or even new female mystics like Chiara Lubich. The new sense of being a “we” that emerges in the accompaniment of the mysticism of the poor is neither a revolutionary social class as envisioned in Marxism nor the spirit of free enterprise that binds people together in a common desire for raising capital. Lonergan’s contribution to this discussion is to highlight the role of shared world of meaning and value in the midst of the fourfold process of intentionality: experience, insight, judgment, and decision. We cannot take it for granted in our North American society that, for example, the mystical worldview of *Guadalupanos* binds Mexicans and Irish Catholics or the faithful poor and the well-to-do seekers of new age wisdom on a digital platform. Pope Francis acknowledged in the address he delivered in Liberty Square in Philadelphia that the Hispanic presence is changing the very definition of religious freedom

⁸ This teaching of Pope Francis that is explicitly stated in the Spanish version of *Evangelii Gaudium* and is for that reason underscored by Scannone (*La teologia del pueblo*, 237). The English translation, however, simply speaks about listening to the promptings of the Spirit “together.”

⁹ *Evangelii Gaudium* 32,106, 145, 166, 175, 177, 201, 254, 261, and 270.

¹⁰ *Evangelii Gaudium* 254.

and historical progress in this country.¹¹ Through Scannone, Pope Francis, and Bernard Lonergan, we are challenged to forge new levels of understanding on the level of theory, practice, and creative reconfigurations of our social and ecclesial life that will enable us to develop a shared mysticism of the “we.”¹² Scannone’s “we” is certainly not the same as the “We, the people,” of the founding documents of the United States of America. But his insights into Pope Francis’s vision of both individual and community are certainly an opportunity to re-examine the authentic “we” that binds us and keeps us together as a Church, a nation, and, no less so, as a people living in a context of radically plural beliefs.

By way of conclusion, I would like to return to the Pope’s address at the welcome ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House. True to form, the Pope wanted the first encounter in the public sphere of U.S. life to transcend the customary niceties. After invoking his solidarity with immigrants to and from the entire expanse of the Americas, he noted the convergence of President Obama’s clean air initiative with his call for sustainable development in *Laudato Si’* 13. He then cited a warning that had first been uttered in close proximity to the White House, a striking turn of phrase that Dr. Martin Luther King had coined on August 28, 1963 from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial while delivering his “I have a dream speech”:

Our common home has been part of this group of the excluded which cries out to heaven and which today powerfully strikes our homes, our cities, and our societies. To use a telling phrase of the Reverend Martin Luther King, we can

¹¹ See Peter Casarella, “Pope Francis, Theology of the People, and the Church in the United States,” in *Discovering Pope Francis: The Roots of Jorge Mario Bergoglio’s Thinking*, ed., Brian Y. Lee and Rev. Thomas L. Knoebel (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2019), 177-208.

¹² For a deeper appreciation of the pivotal role of Lonergan’s multiple conversions to the philosophical method of Scannone, see Lorenz Bruno Puntel, “Consideraciones acerca de la concepción y el manejo del método filosófico en J.C. Scannone,” in *Filosofía y teología en diálogo desde América Latina. Homenaje a Juan Carlos Sannone, sj en su 80 cumpleaños*, ed. José María Cantó, sj and Pablo Figueroa, sj (Córdoba: Editorial de la Universidad Católica de Córdoba, 2013), 296-306.

say that we have defaulted on a promissory note and now is the time to honor it.¹³

Social change is not about mapping our current aspirations for humanity onto a utopian future so that later generations can benefit from the unfolding of the inner lights of those alive today.

Francis has decried that form of a neo-Pelagianism time and again.¹⁴ On the contrary, we owe a debt to our children's children, and the penalties are accruing on account of our failure to fulfill our responsibility to future generations. Social progress is about God's solidarity with the *anawhim* or little ones. The Baptist civil rights leader and the Argentine Pope are of one mind on this point. Modes of discernment are urgently needed for an integral ecological conversion and for new models of social inclusion. The former Archbishop Bergoglio seemed joyful at the hospitality accorded to him on the South Lawn, but his words were not just about upholding a civil exchange between two heads of state. The Pope used the platform of the South Lawn to remind U.S. residents of *their own version* of a prophet of the Old Testament, the preacher from Birmingham who led the march for civil rights and wove his own Christian dream out of the torn and tattered fabric of North American social memory.

Pope Francis thus has no illusions about importing an Argentine brand of the theology of the people to the United States. His own carefully chosen words belie such a simplification. With the aid of the prodigious work of Juan Carlos Scannone, we can interpret the sources that Argentine Catholics and political theorists used to build a common home for the Argentine people and for *la patria Grande* of Latin America. This offering is rich and filled with delicious morsels. But the readers in the English-speaking world will have to discover their own synthesis

¹³ Pope Francis, "Welcoming Ceremony," South Lawn of the White House, Washington, D.C. Wednesday, 23 September 2015, available on-line at http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150923_usa-benvenuto.html.

¹⁴ See Stuart Squires, *The Pelagian Controversy* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2019), 278-94.

and their own path to a theology for the people whose identity as a people was forged “in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”¹⁵ The task of forging a theology of the people for the troubled but ever optimistic “we” of the North is daunting. Reading this book is no doubt a great place to start. Absorbing its wisdom will surely reap its own personal, intellectual, spiritual, socio-political, and, of course, ecclesial rewards. The true joy of the Gospel is that we can stretch our faith-filled horizons of understanding to seek with confidence all of this urgently needed renewal, for in his mercy and through the resurrection of Christ from the dead, we have already received “a new birth to a living hope.”¹⁶

Peter Casarella
Duke Divinity School

¹⁵ From the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution.

¹⁶ 1 Peter 1:3.